

forefront of this storm, and I am so grateful for the Border Patrol leading this effort.

Mr. Speaker, I wish Chief Skero a wonderful retirement. It is well-deserved.

ENDING CHILD LABOR IN COCOA AND CHOCOLATE INDUSTRY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. QUIGLEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, it is time to discuss the steps we must take to end child labor in the cocoa and chocolate industry.

This issue was brought to my attention by the students at Bell Elementary School in Chicago. Through the guidance of their teacher, Mr. Barash, these students learned the disturbing relationship between child labor and chocolate production.

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During my visit with their class, they shared with me their concern for children who are forced into child labor in this industry. Some of these children are sold to traffickers or farm owners or are abducted only to be taken to cocoa farms for work. Some do not see their families again for years—some never again.

Most children in the industry begin their days before the sun rises and end it long after the sun sets. They are forced to wield dangerous machetes while climbing up and down trees to cut down bean pods. Then they must carry the pods in sacks weighing more than 100 pounds through the forest. If the children don't work fast enough, the farm owners beat them. When they are finally able to rest, they must sleep on wooden planks in small, windowless buildings with little or no access to clean water.

Many of these children will never attend school or receive an education. The passionate elementary schoolers who told me about this made the compelling case that we must eradicate child labor from this industry and make sure these children are no longer forced into dangerous, unlawful working conditions.

How can we justify all of this for the sake of chocolate?

I am not the first Member of this body to be concerned about these practices. This fight was first taken up in Congress by former Representative Eliot Engel of New York who worked to establish a labeling standard to indicate on chocolate products that no child labor had been used in its production.

While this effort did not succeed, he was joined by former Senator Tom Harkin to establish what we call the Harkin-Engel Protocol. This protocol was an agreement between governments, chocolate companies, and cocoa producers to eliminate the worst forms of child labor within cocoa production.

While the protocol has been effective, this problem persists. In 2015, 14 years

after the protocol's signing, the Department of Labor reported that more than 2 million children were engaged in child labor in cocoa growing regions of West Africa. Although the chocolate industry made a promise to end child labor almost 20 years ago, today, no company can guarantee their products are free of child labor. While chocolate producers have shown some concern for the lives of these children through dedicated funding to eradicate child labor in their industry, it has simply not been enough.

The three largest chocolate suppliers in the world are not even able to identify the farms where their cocoa is being produced. As Americans, we must recognize that much of the chocolate we enjoy is harvested and produced at the expense of these young children.

We cannot let this continue. Kids should be in schools. Kids should be playing. Kids should be with friends. Kids should be kids.

After speaking with the children at Bell Elementary, I was proud to take the first step in the Labor-HHS and Education appropriations bill by including language to reinvigorate the Department of Labor's role in the international Child Labor Cocoa Coordinating Group and to hold the companies in countries involved accountable for the promises they made almost 20 years ago under the Harkin-Engel Protocol. But there is still much to do.

I look forward to working with my colleagues in Congress and Secretary Walsh to bring an end to child labor in the cocoa industry. I also want to acknowledge the amazing 12 and 13 year olds who brought this to my attention and are fighting for children they don't know halfway across the world. Standing with these students and working to further their mission is why I am proud to be a Member of this body: to ensure that students like this have their voices heard by Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to going back to Chicago and the Bell Elementary students to tell them that Congress is listening.

FOREST MANAGEMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. LAMALFA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, it has been obvious for years now that we need to rethink our forest management strategies.

2020 was the worst fire season on record for California and much of the West. California alone saw 4.2 million acres of land burned. Currently, there are 85 large fires burning across the West and already 1½ million acres burnt.

Last week the smoke reached all the way to Washington, D.C., causing health advisories for people not to be outside if they either have health issues or for athletic purposes in D.C. and Baltimore. The plume even reached all the way up to New York.

The U.S. Forest Service and the Department of the Interior have identified more than 80 million acres that are overgrown and at a high risk of fire.

As wildfires burn across California and the West, Republicans have several bill proposals before this House that would improve forest management. These bills propose comprehensive solutions to address the declining health of our forests and help prevent catastrophic wildfires by expediting the environmental analysis, reducing frivolous lawsuits, and increasing the pace and scale of management practices.

We have suppressed fires for over 110 years which is okay on the surface, but now most forests are intensely overstocked and overgrown with the fuel that causes the fires because we didn't do the other side of the coin: the harvest work, the treatment, and the removing of materials.

For example, in California most forest types had in the past about 64 trees per acre in the mid-1800s. Now they sit at over 300 trees per acre or more, causing weak trees that are more susceptible to insects and ultimately death because they don't have enough water supply, and so this in itself exacerbates the drought within the forest with all the competition of trees per acre and the death of the trees themselves.

One of my bills, the CLEAR Zones Act, would allow better clearing around power lines. It would allow a wider buffer to prevent trees from falling on the lines and igniting a fire which is what they do. A tree falling into power lines lately was likely the cause of the Dixie fire, currently the largest fire burning in California. So far it has burned right around 200,000 acres in my district, and it is only 22 percent contained.

This is hitting the area north of the Camp fire that burned in 2018. As you might remember from history, Mr. Speaker, it burned the town of Paradise, part of Magalia, Concow, and Yankee Hill, this large area here.

Then following up in 2020 was the North Complex fire. They are burning up against each other basically over history here. And now we have the Dixie fire, as it is known, along with a smaller one called the Fly fire which have burned together. Pretty soon the whole landscape is going to have a history of having burned.

For what reason?

It is because we won't manage the lands. We won't do what needs to be done to put the kind of buffers and the kind of zones in that would help make it easier for the firefighters.

Well, the solutions we do have are: we have proper forest management. We have seen that in this area here, around this current Dixie fire.

The Collins Pine Company based in Chester, California, and a lot of areas in northern California, has done a lot of free work along highways around the community that would be very, very helpful and ultimately will be very helpful towards the type of management that will make us fire-safe.